TC/PC Exists to Facilitate and Encourage the Cooperative Exchange of PC Knowledge and Information Across All Levels of Experience

December 2025

General Meeting [4]
Tuesday, December 9, 2025
7:00 PM

AI: Tips and Tricks
Presenter: Chris Taylor

OR

Northern Lights
Presenter: Jack Ungerleider

Via Zoom Only

The December meeting should be a fun adventure. As the newsletter editor is heading off to Guatemala, it was uncertain which presentation would happen. Come to the meeting and find out. They are both worth your presence. Be prepared for January meeting: Show Us Your Gadget! 🖥

Note: All TC/PC Meetings and SIG Groups will be virtual until further notice. Visit tcpc.com for info.

Tech Topics with Jack Ungerleider via Zoom at 6pm before the General Meeting.

APCUG

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Editor Sharon Walbran

Upcoming Meetings:
January 13. 2026
Show Us Your Gadget!

 If you received a recent gift of a fun gadget or accessory or computer program or or a new way of using something. Maybe gifted yourself to something new, we want to hear about it at our first meeting of the new year. Show us some photos or demonstrate its use live and tell us why we might want to buy it or make it or program it.

FYI
By Dan DeLong
Durham Personal Computer Users Group Newsletter
http://www.durhampc-usersclub.on.ca/

AI Designed Computer Chips-
A lab at Princeton is experimenting with purpose built AI chip designs (WiFi and automobile chips being one of the design goals). The results have been both impressive and confusing. Some AI chips designs are revolutionary in complexity, yet so convoluted that human engineers cannot follow the logic of these designs. When the human cannot 'fix' a confusing design, it may be discarded, even if it works. Those that work well, despite complexity, may enter consumer products... eventually. None of this research is secret, since the results have been openly published in Nature Communications.

 https://www.popularmechanics.com/science/a63606123/ai-designed-computer-chips/

"AI Slop"
That's the term, now circulating, to describe AI generated images and articles that have no redeeming value, other than the generation of clicks. For a short time, Google's Gemini AI was one of these "slop" sources, generating postings all over the Web. Only paid Gemini users can now create AI slop images. Medium is the site most strongly effected by 'Slop', with almost half of recent articles and images touched by AI. Facebook appears to welcomes such slop. This is dangerous because some viewers believe slop is real.

https://www.wired.com/story/ai-generated-medium-posts-content-moderation/

Ten Mile Wi-Fi Router
This router is neither expensive, nor power hungry, yet it has a range of 10 miles (using an external antenna) making it suitable for long Ethernet cable replacement. The only drawback, for some users, is the 32Mbps max. speed (on the 8Mhz band), or 300Mbps (on the 40Mhz band). HaLowLink 1 runs on WiFi 4 and a custom Wi-Fi HaLow. The current model is equipped with two Gigabit Ethernet ports. MOUSER Electronics is the European seller. ($150CAD)

https://www.techradar.com/pro/revolutionary-wi-fi-router-that-can-send-data-up-to-10-miles-away-goes-on-sale-forless-than-usd100-just-make-sure-youre-happy-with-the-32mbps-speed

Google may replace Wi-Fi with Li-Fi

Well, it may not be soon, but they're working on it. The light transmitter/receiver chip is now quite small, with tests at 12 miles showing success. Speeds may reach 20Gbps as long as line-of-sight is not interrupted by rain fog and smog, or any flying object crossing the light beam's path. This

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technique is already in use for a bunch of phone companies, taking the load off fibre when the weather is good. [Since clear line of sight is almost never a problem at high altitudes, perhaps blimps, or solar planes could act as a stage for long distance Li-Fi, as long as they can be made stable and accurately aimed.]

https://gizmodo.com/google-is-developing-technology-to-deliver-internet-via-light-bridges-2000570215

Axis of Easy –

the latest Mark Jeftovic's latest post concerns Musk's 5 point demand, AI is aiding crime, GitHub scrubbing, Britain and Sweden wanting back doors, Linux malware, 3.3 million records breached, and more...

https://mc.easydns.com/email/view/67c27f3f4cac7859821155

Axis Of Easy Brings Security News

Once again, Marc Jeftovic, the owner of Canadian provider EasyDNS, has a lot to say about recent security breaches. Here's the topic summary for this issue:

☐ Russian Hackers Exploit Signal's Device-Linking Feature to Spy on Military and Civilian Communications

☐ New XCSSET Malware Variant Targets macOS Developers With Advanced Persistence and Obfuscation Techniques

☐ North Korean Cyber Group Kimsuky Escalates Stealth Attacks With Dropbox and PowerShell

☐ Chinese Programmer Burns $1.65M in Ethereum, Donates $5.35M Amid Allegations Against Hedge Fund Executives

☐ Google's Fingerprinting Policy Sparks Privacy Backlash and Regulatory Scrutiny

https://mc.easydns.com/email/view/67b944ced361e541584693

Best Linux Laptops

Nowadays, operating systems, browsers, and online services, encroach even more on our movements, tracking and fingerprinting our behaviours. As Windows 10 support nears its end, Linux looks more and more attractive. In fact, most older computers do quite well, handling installation and security, as long as we stay away from services and browsers from Microsoft and Google. This Wired Magazine's article (link below) along with many others on the same topic, provide guidance when it comes to selecting the most appropriate hardware for both your computing and your Linux needs. Wired also offers a selection guide—a step by step, for laptops in general.

https://www.wired.com/story/best-linux-laptops/

One Trillion Dollars – How Best to Spend It?

Up to recently, the vast sums of money paid to middle east countries, for oil, have been spent on expensive toys, skyscrapers, luxury palaces, and majestic yachts. The head of UAE's security and surveillance once spent lots of money on a super computer, solely to win at chess. Now, he's ready

to spend up to one trillion on AI, if he can buy enough NVIDIA (or equivalent) GPUs, and find enough electrical power to run them. [This is where Canada's abundance of electrical power comes in, and perhaps, why Trump talks about a 51st state.] Future concern over the security of American AI technology (in the hands of the Saudis) and fearing that leaks to China may happen (since both governments are repressive and dictatorships) the Biden government put strictures on such technological surrender. [AI can, has been, and will, be used to watch over and control societies.] One trillion dollars is one thousand billion dollars! Can anyone think of a better way to spend it?

https://www.wired.com/story/uae-intelligence-chief-ai-money/

ASUS Scented Mouse and Pad

Under, "-never knew I needed this." is a nice smelling new product from ASUS... it is the MD101 fragrance mouse. Add an aromatic oil to the vial inside, then perform 10 million (lifespan) clicks over the one year battery life. This mouse does not appear to be available in Canada, yet, which may be a blessing. [However, it offers an opportunity for some hilarious practical jokes.]

https://www.asus.com/accessories/mice-and-mouse-pads/asus-mouse-and-mouse-pad/asus-fragrance-mouse-md101/

#droppingthingsonmyfoot -TikTok Hashtag If this behaviour is true, blocking TikTok may be "the better idea". Millions of video views, for those dropping heavy objects on their foot/feet, then subjectively ranking how painful that experience was, is done for both entertainment and, possibly, money. [The link (below) to MyLondon seems a little sketchy.]

https://www.mylondon.news/news/uk-world-news/tiktokers-dropping-heavy-objects-feet-31061990

Kids and online gadgets.

Although this article, based on a Kaspersky study, refers to South African children, it applies almost universally. Too many parents provide devices for their children at a very young age, without any supervision or discussion about safety. Tablets, phones, and televisions keep the kids busy and out of their hair. These kids became so dependant on their devices for information and entertainment that the need to be "on" is like a drug addiction. That's not healthy for them, or society at large.

https://www.pressreader.com/south-africa/sunday-tribune-south-africa/20250223/281749865088988

RGBlink

Mini-pro multi-port mixer, streamer, recorder This product will be of interest only to those who record game play or who create sophisticated podcasts. The mini-pro is a new product, but it is not the only RGBlink device, by far. It takes in up to 4 HDMI 4K inputs (video and sound) plus separate audio lines in/out, and sends out a 1080p HDMI signal, for live broadcast or for recording. Output can be directed to OBS (the free streaming software package) through the USB3.1 port. Switch between any input with the push of a large button (with transitions) or by touching the screen (or through a connected computer app). So much has been packed into this small video/audio editor, including various picture-in-picture options. The joystick is for camera

zoom, tilt, and pan. Chroma key uses either a green or blue background. This is a Chinese company with a wide assortment of similar products, ranging in price from hundreds to tens to thousands of dollars. [This one is so new that no price has been released, although reviewers describe it as affordable... in the hundreds of dollars.]

https://www.rgblink.com/mini-pro

Choosing a Graphics Card

Those wishing to build a new desktop computer and equip it with a separate graphics card, may find the latest reviews at Tom's Hardware Reviews helpful. These cards range in price from a few hundred to a few thousand dollars. Some are no longer in stock. [Perhaps they'd been bought up for AI training or bit coin accounting.] As soon as Quantum computing takes over some of these tasks, "used cards" should appear on the market, at greatly reduced prices. The list of cards and testing results is quite long, but of great interest to Gamers.

https://www.tomshardware.com/reviews/gpu-hierarchy,4388.html

Framework's most recent...

Framework computers offer long sought after DIY features, in that the components are standard, easily fixed and easily upgraded. Each computer is equipped with 4 or 6 expansion slots, for a variety of quick change plug-in ports, like HDMI/display port, memory (up to 2TB), audio plug ports, and Ethernet. The newest laptop, Framework 12, is now accompanied by a first ever Framework Mini-ITX Desktop. It is a small format box, easily disassembled, all the way down to motherboard and processor (Strix Halo CPU) replacement. This desktop has a holder for a primary and secondary SSD (NVMe type) 1TB each (nice for keeping operating system,/apps and data drives separate). Although built in Taiwan (by Compal), and shipped from there, some Canadians may find it difficult to pay in USD (due to the current exchange rate), and policy whims of the American government. Moreover, Framework computers may ship without an operating system (but, accepts both Windows and Linux), and without hard drives. [Some users are making 3D printed accessories and new expansion cards for Frameworks.]

https://frame.work/ca/en

StairSteady

Artificial Intelligence may not be able to (or inclined to) invent a human aid like the StairSteady... requiring no electricity or expensive installation. As a teen, UK's Ruth Amos took it upon herself to figure out how a simple mechanical device could largely replace expensive StairMaster, electrically powered, chair lifts. StairSteady consists of a handrail and a collapsible handle, that resists backward slippage by clamping onto the rail by friction. The person climbing stairs, while holding the horizontal baton, simply slides it along with a gentle push; but when pulling on it, to aid in balance, it locks itself into that new position, working a little like a mechanical ratchet. Think of it as a movable

safety bar. Users who can still walk, can walk for longer. [It can also be used as a security aid for children (or the disabled) who are learning to climb stairs.] The hand bar easily fold down, out of the way, at top or bottom of the stairs. Some prefer to keep it in the horizontal position, especially at the top of the stairs, for safety. Installation services are available in the UK and Australia, and it is coming to Canada. Pricing depends more on custom installation than on the cost of hardware.

https://stairsteady.net/

The Raspberry Pi is 13 years old.
The Raspberry Pi was first introduced at the end of February 2012, making it a fine gift for a curious 13 year old person, born in the same year. It is one way to escape the Microsoft umbrella, since Pi computers run Linux only. Of course, leaving it powered on all the time shortens its life, as happens with all electronics. If continually pwered, it may last only five years-- a life shorter than most furry friends. Some advisors suggest a nightly reboot, for more secure and smooth operation.

Turntables for Vinyl Audio-
Technica appears to be the go-to-brand for both belt and direct drive turntables. For a good sounding unit – one that is tough, with a pre-amp—for both wired and Bluetooth listening, this $300CDN model stands out. [Price is from Kawartha TV & Stereo, for the Audio-Technica AT-LP60XBT-BK.] Direct drive turn tables would be the choice for an audiophile, but at ten times the price. Belts (on belt driven turntables like this) can be replaced, on less expensive turntables (when they gradually degrade, losing accuracy in tone [This, according to a New York Magazine, the Strategist.]

https://nymag.com/strategist/article/best-turntables-record-players.html

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Helcim –
keeps charge card money in Canada's This Calgary based small business payment acceptance company, saw an opportunity to cash in on the lucrative charge card fee system, by offering transparency and lower fees. As a bonus; the head office is in Canada, keeping much of the money in Canada. [I assume American customers also contribute to the bottom line in Canada.] If you are a business owner, accepting credit cards, this might be for you.
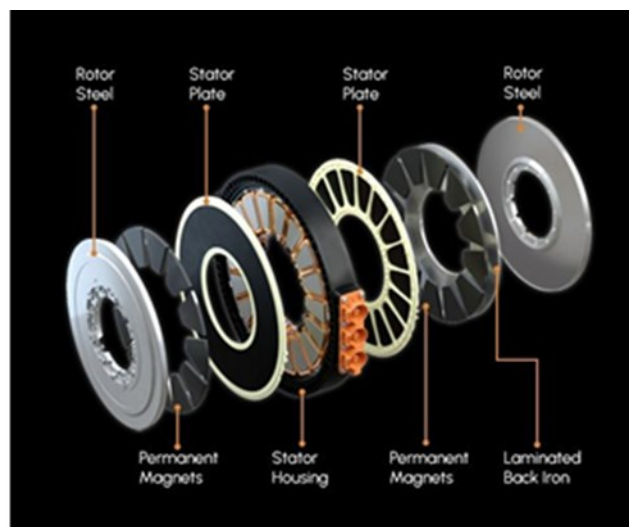Check it out. https://www.helcim.com/

Evolito Axial Flux Motor

The Axial Flux motor won't take you on a "Back to the Future" adventure, but they are an important development, having such a high power to weight ratio – most suitable for aeronautics—as a safer power unit for battery powered blimps. Some of these motors are designed for high rotation speed and low torque, while others are designed for low speed and high torque, or anywhere in between. For battery driven prop planes, as well as for blimps, battery controllers help to keep weight down.
Current electric motors for cars are of the radial design, rather than axial. The axial design allows stacking of motor components, to increase power (like adding cylinders to a gas engine).

https://evolito.aero/axial-flux-motors/

Solar Panels Improved

China has almost cornered the market on current solar panels, which are both brittle and heavy... and which use indium, a rare mineral. UK scientists have removed the need for indium, along with the other brittle and weighty materials, to mass produce a flexible, thin, solar, applique, suitable for roof tops, or any surface exposed to sunlight. Microgrooves in the plastic are filled with perovskite material connected together during the manufacturing process, to carry electricity. [Omitted in the article... an important detail – is the power density better, the same, or worse, and how long do they last?]

https://interestingengineering.com/energy/uk-new-flexible-solar-cell

Virtual eTasting

Electronic tongue tasting, virtually, may not yet be able to elicit tastes for fattiness or spiciness, but it has been successful in simulating most other tastes, like lemonade, cake, fried eggs, coffee, or fish soup.

https://www.theguardian.com/science/2025/feb/28/scientists-create-e-taste-device-that-could-add-flavour-to-virtualreality-experiences

Pomera – for writers

Despite the portability of tablets and their ability to take dictation, writers still prefer a real keyboard along with spell check, outlining, word count, and no distractions. Pomera is a Japanese invention, coming soon to the US and Canada (at about $600CDN). Although Pomera will not go on the Internet, it still has wired and wireless ability to send or receive text files to other devises. The battery lasts about 20 hours. Think of it as a fold-able typewriter, with lots of extra features.

https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/pomera-full-suite-typewriter-for-focused-writing#/

Skype is Closing in May

Users of twenty year old Skype may still log into Teams, without losing contacts or conversations maintained by Skype, which has lost relevance in the face of competitive services. No mention has been made of the fate of free phone numbers and free, or the nearly free phone calls features – the main attraction.

https://www.msn.com/en-us/technology/software/skype-is-shutting-down-after-two-decades/ar-AA1zZV5l

In other news, Copilot, is expanding its sphere of influence beyond the Windows World, into Macs.

https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/technology/microsoft-s-most-useless-windows-app-is-finally-coming-to-mac/arAA1zYiSy

Google might delete your account

Davey Winder is a journalist 9with many Google accounts) who received an email from Google, indicating that one of his accounts would be deleted soon, including all photos, and messages. It was real!... but only because that particular account had not been logged into for a couple of years.

He uses it (as an ID name) to validate other accounts with Google, and, perhaps, other authenticators. Google also offered him a way to download his data.

When Hotmail and Gmail first started, many of us did what Davey did; we created many accounts with both free services, since they allowed storage space for photos and other attachments. Microsoft has already taken action on dormant accounts, by requiring more frequent logins and by tricking us into concatenating our varied accounts under one account. Redirects took care of old Hotmail accounts, as long as they were used frequently enough (which was a moving target).

[Skype required frequent logins in order to maintain your account balance. If you didn't do this, the money vanished. And now, Skype itself is vanishing!]

https://www.forbes.com/sites/daveywinder/2025/03/02/google-will-delete-my-gmail-and-photos-on-april-3-how-tosave-yours/

Linux in the News

By Alex Morrison
Durham Personal Computer Users Groups
http://www.durhampc-usersclub.on.ca/

Linus Torvalds Reportedly Plans To Merge Rust Code Into Linux Kernel
Christoph Hellwig, a Kernel maintainer, has revealed that Linus Torvalds privately expressed his intention to merge Rust code into the Linux kernel.

5 Ways to Get Speech Output From Your Linux Terminal
This article provides various tools that give your terminal a voice and discover a whole new way to interact with your Linux system.

NVIDIA vs AMD on Linux: Which GPU Should You Choose?
Should you go with NVIDIA or AMD on Linux? Find the answer by understanding the pros and cons of each, and make an informed decision. NVIDIA 570 Linux Graphics Driver Released with New Features and Improvements 0 Comments Posted in Drivers / News NVIDIA 570 graphics driver is now available for download with VRR (variable refresh rate) support on multi-monitor setups and other changes. Here's what's new!

LibreOffice 25.2.1 Office Suite Is Now Available for Download with 77 Bug Fixes 2 Comments Posted in Apps /   News
LibreOffice 25.2.1 is now available for download as the first point release to the latest LibreOffice 25.2 office suite series with 77 bug fixes.

KDE Plasma 6.3.2 Released with Animated WebP and GIF Support for Spectacle 0 Comments Posted in Desktops /   News
KDE Plasma 6.3.2 is now available as the second maintenance update to the latest KDE Plasma 6.3 desktop environment series with more bug fixes and other improvements.🖥

December

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9 7pm General Mtg TBA 6pm Tech Topics	10	11	12	13 Linux on Saturday SIG 9:00-Noon
14	15	16	17	18	19	20 MS Office SIG (includes Access) 9:00-Noon
21	22	23	24	25	26	27

January

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
28	29	30	31	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10 Linux on Saturday SIG 9:00-Noon
11	12	13 7pm General Mtg Show Us Your Gadget 6pm Tech Topics	14	15	16	17 MS Office SIG (includes Access) 9:00-Noon
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

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You have just read an issue of The Digital Viking.

Would you like to receive this delivered directly to your email or business each month?

As a member of TC/PC, the Twin Cities Personal Computer Group, one of the benefits
is reading this monthly publication at www.tcpc.com..

As a member of TC/PC, you may attend any or all of the monthly Special Interest Group (SIG) meetings and be eligible for
software drawings. The small membership fee also includes
access to real-live people with answers via our helplines, discounts, and various other perks.

Does membership in this group sound like a good way to increase your computer knowledge?

It's easy to do! Simply fill in the form below and mail it to the address shown.
(If you use the form in this issue, you will receive an extra month for joining now.)

12/25

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Address_____

City_____ State_____ Zip_____

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Home phone_____ Work phone_____

Online address(es) _____

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❍ Business Membership ($100)
If an existing member your # _____
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341 County Rd C2 W
Roseville, MN 55113

Or sign up on our website:

http://www.tcpc.com

❍ Check #_____ ❍ Bill me
❍ New member ❍ Renewal ❍ Prior member
I'm interested in:
❍ Training classes ❍ Volunteering
❍ Special Interest Groups: New User, Access, etc.
List here:

December 9, 2025

7:00 pm

General Meeting

AI: Tips and Tricks
Presenter: Chris Taylor

OR

Northern Lights
Presenter: Jack Ungerleider

Via Zoom Only

Twin Cities
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